

# Amazing presentation lifts 'Bridal Polonaise'

By Richard Christiansen  
Critic at large

"BRIDAL POLONAISE," which takes the viewer on an extraordinary journey of theatrical images, is the work of the young Englishman Steven Rumbelow, a director from whom one has come to expect the extraordinary.

Since his first visit here two years ago, Rumbelow has brought some of the techniques and talents of the European avant-garde to Chicago, first with his own Triple Action Theater, then in collaboration with Remains Theater and now, in this latest and most ambitious effort, with the young Black Bird Theater at 5845 N. Broadway.

The theater is in an old Chicago North Shore Street Railway warehouse, and its vast space has given Rumbelow the opportunity to construct a striking maze of experience, through which he leads his audience into his own vision of the past and present of beleaguered Poland.

The evening begins with the customers being ushered through a reception line and into a hall for a jolly Polish wedding reception. A singer and accordionist entertain, the bride and groom dance blissfully, a priest blesses the newlyweds, food and drink are passed around.

Gradually, however, the merriment changes to tension as the singer tells increasingly political Polish jokes. The father of the bride, a supporter of the militarist regime, grapples angrily with the rebellious groom. The fight moves into slow motion, the bridal party dissolves, and the singer, after announcing that conflict has always been a part of Poland, invites the audience to enter the adjoining hall for a view of the Polish past.

HERE, THE viewers are seated while a white-jacketed tour guide and ghosts of the past show Poland, in the image of Christ and the Disputed Bride of Europe, being crucified and raped. The masses huddle in misery, a drunk wails out his grief, a fool spouts German in the mock guise of Hitler, a gas-masked soldier shines a spotlight on the action from a tall guard tower.

From there, the audience descends to the lower depths for a walk through the inferno and madhouse of impoverished present-day Poland. The groom gives a passionate speech in Polish on his motherland; the rest of the cast, behind bars, sings a patriotic song and slowly disappears. The only light at the end comes from a candle burning in a window frame.

This is a simple summary but hardly an adequate visualization of the scenes in "Bridal Polonaise." Be assured, however, that, along with some foolishness, this highly ambitious evening of theatrical techniques and esthetics is filled with stunning symbols. Much of the text is in Polish, but the meanings are clear in the highly charged performances from a valiant cast.

The piece lasts a little under two hours, much of which is spent standing up. It would be wise to wear casual, light clothing should you choose to attend. If you have any interest in theater, you should make the effort.

## "Bridal Polonaise"

A work for the theater written and directed by Steven Rumbelow, with a setting by Patrick Kerwin, lighting by Stanley Sidilk and costumes by Maureen Rumbelow. Opened June 9 in the Black Bird Theater, 5845 N. Broadway, and plays at 8 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, through July 29. Length of performance, 1:50. Tickets are \$10. Phone 334-8212.

### THE CAST

Bureaucrat	Jureg Janeczek
Bridegroom	Zbigniew Jankowski
Priest	Macej Suszynski
White Soldier	Tom Everaz
Mother	Yvotte Edelhart
Guide	Ewa Adrian
Fool	Stuart Greenman
Best Man	Casey Siemaszko
Bride	Wendy Oldenburg
Boy	Donald Lane
Entertainer	Bob Nelson